



China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)

International Religious Freedom Report 2008

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

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The Constitution and laws provide for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe, although the Constitution only protects religious activities defined by the state as "normal." The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign domination," and that the individual exercise of rights "may not infringe upon the interests of the state." The Constitution also recognizes the leading role of the officially atheist Chinese Communist Party.

The Government restricted legal religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered religious groups and places of worship, and sought to control the growth and scope of the activity of both registered and unregistered religious groups, including "house churches." Government authorities limited proselytism, particularly by foreigners and unregistered religious groups, but permitted proselytism in state-approved religious venues and private settings.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's repression of religious freedom intensified in some areas, including in Tibetan areas and in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Unregistered Protestant religious groups in Beijing reported intensified harassment from government authorities in the lead up to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Media and China-based sources reported that municipal authorities in Beijing closed some house churches or asked them to stop meeting during the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. During the reporting period, officials detained and interrogated several foreigners about their religious activities and in several cases alleged that the foreigners had engaged in "illegal religious activities" and cancelled their visas. Media reported that the total number of expatriates expelled by the Government due to concerns about their religious activities exceeded one hundred. Officials in the XUAR, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and other Tibetan areas tightly controlled religious activity. The Government sought the forcible return of several Uighur Muslims living abroad, some of whom had reportedly protested restrictions on the Hajj and encouraged other Muslims to pray and fast during Ramadan. Followers of Tibetan Buddhism, including those in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region and most Tibetan autonomous areas, faced more restrictions on their religious practice and ability to organize than Buddhists in other parts of the country. "Patriotic education" campaigns in the TAR and other Tibetan regions, which required monks and nuns to sign statements personally denouncing the Dalai Lama, and other new restrictions on religious freedom were major factors that led monks and nuns to mount peaceful protests at a number of monasteries on March 10, 2008. The protests and subsequent security response gave way to violence in Lhasa by March 14 and 15 (see separate appendix for additional reporting). "Underground" Roman Catholic clergy faced repression, in large part due to their avowed loyalty to the Vatican, which the Government accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs. The Government continued to repress groups that it designated as "cults," which included several Christian groups and Falun Gong.

Religious and ethnic minority groups such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims experienced societal discrimination not only because of their religious beliefs but also because of their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. After the March 2008 protests in Lhasa and other Tibetan areas there were reports of increased tensions between Tibetan Buddhists and Hui Muslims.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom in the

country. U.S. officials condemned abuses while supporting positive trends within the country and urged the Government to expand the scope of religious freedom for both registered and unregistered religious groups according to citizens' constitutional and internationally recognized rights. U.S. officials protested the imprisonment of, asked to attend the trials of, and requested further information about, numerous individual religious prisoners. U.S. officials encouraged the Government to address policies that restricted Tibetan Buddhist practices and contributed to tensions in the TAR and other Tibetan regions.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has assigned the "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) designation to the country under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 3.5 million square miles and a population of 1.3 billion. A February 2007 survey, conducted by researchers in Shanghai and reported in the state-run media, concluded that 31.4 percent of Chinese citizens ages 16 and over, representing 300 million persons, are religious believers. This is approximately three times the official figure reported by the Government in April 2005.

According to a Government White Paper published in 1997, there are reportedly more than 100,000 officially recognized sites for religious activities, 300,000 officially recognized clergy, and more than 3,000 officially recognized religious organizations.

The Government officially recognizes five main religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. There are five state-sanctioned "Patriotic Religious Associations" (PRAs) that manage the activities of the recognized faiths. The Russian Orthodox Church operates in some regions, particularly those with large populations of Russian expatriates or with close links to Russia. Foreign residents in the country who belonged to religious faiths not officially recognized by the Government were generally permitted to practice their religions.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Buddhists and Taoists, because they do not have congregational memberships and many practice exclusively at home.

The Government estimated that there are 16,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries, 200,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, more than 1,700 reincarnate lamas, and 32 Buddhist schools. Most believers, particularly ethnic Han Buddhists, practice Mahayana Buddhism, while the majority of Tibetans and ethnic Mongolians, as well as a growing number of ethnic Chinese, practice Tibetan Buddhism, a Mahayana adaptation. Some ethnic minorities in southwest Yunnan Province practice Theravada Buddhism, the dominant tradition in parts of neighboring Southeast Asia.

According to the government-sanctioned Taoist Association, there are more than 25,000 Taoist priests and nuns, more than 1,500 Taoist temples, and 2 Taoist schools. Traditional folk religions (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors) are practiced by hundreds of millions of citizens and are often affiliated with Taoism, Buddhism, or ethnic minority cultural practices.

According to official figures, there are as many as twenty million Muslims. Independent estimates range as high as fifty million or more. There are more than 40,000 Islamic places of worship (more than half of which are in the XUAR), more than 45,000 imams nationwide, and 10 Islamic schools. The country has ten predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Hui, estimated to number more than ten million. The Hui are centered in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, but there are significant concentrations of Hui throughout the country, including in Gansu, Henan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Hebei Provinces, as well as in the TAR and the XUAR. Hui Muslims slightly outnumber Uighur Muslims, who live primarily in the XUAR. According to an official 2005 report, the XUAR had 23,900 mosques and 27,000 clerics at the end of 2004, but fewer than half of the mosques were authorized to hold Friday prayer and holiday services. The country also has more than one million Kazakh Muslims and thousands of Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajik, Uzbek, Baoan, and Tatar Muslims.

Officials from the Three-Self Patriotic Movement/China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC), the state-approved

Protestant religious organization, estimated that at least twenty million citizens worship in official churches. Government officials stated that there are more than 50,000 registered TSPM churches and 18 TSPM theological schools. The Pew Research Center estimates that between 50 million and 70 million Christians practice without state sanction. The World Christian Database estimates that there are more than 300 unofficial house church networks.

The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) reports that 5.3 million persons worship in its churches and it is estimated that there are an additional 12 million or more persons who worship in unregistered Catholic churches that do not affiliate with the CPA. According to official sources, the government-sanctioned CPA has more than 70 bishops, nearly 3,000 priests and nuns, 6,000 churches and meeting places, and 12 seminaries. There are thought to be approximately 40 bishops operating "underground," some of whom are in prison or under house arrest. During the reporting period, at least three bishops were ordained with papal approval. In September 2007 the official media reported that Liu Bainian, CPA vice president, stated that the young bishops were to be selected to serve dioceses without bishops and to replace older bishops. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an acting bishop in 2007, and more than 30 bishops were over 80 years of age.

The Falun Gong is a self-described spiritual movement that blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline), with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi. There are estimated to have been at least 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong before the Government banned the group in 1999. Hundreds of thousands may practice Falun Gong privately.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution and laws provide for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe. The Constitution protects only religious activities defined as "normal." The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign domination" and that the individual exercise of rights "may not infringe upon the interests of the state." The Constitution also recognizes the leading role of the officially atheist Chinese Communist Party. The Government sought to restrict legal religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of both registered and unregistered religious groups, including house churches. The Government tried to prevent the rise of religious groups it viewed as constituting a source of authority outside of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Government strongly opposed the profession of loyalty to religious leadership outside of the country. Nonetheless, the treatment of religious groups varied significantly from region to region, and membership in many faiths continued to grow rapidly.

Government officials at various levels have the power to determine the legality of religious activities by deciding whether they are "normal." Public Security Bureau (PSB) and Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officials monitor unregistered facilities, check to see that religious activities do not disrupt public order, and take measures directed against groups designated as cults. Registered religious groups enjoy legal protections of their religious practices that unregistered religious groups do not receive, and unregistered groups are more vulnerable to coercive and punitive state action. The five PRAs are the only organizations registered with the Government at the national level as religious organizations under the Regulations on Social Organizations (RSO), administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA). Leaders of the five PRAs sometimes serve in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an advisory forum that is led by the CCP and consults with social groups outside the Party or the National People's Congress (NPC). The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) and the CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD) provide policy "guidance and supervision" on the implementation of regulations regarding religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity. Employees of SARA and the UFWD are primarily Communist Party members who are directed by Party doctrine to be atheists.

The 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA) protect the rights of registered religious groups to possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy, and collect donations. The Government had not issued implementing regulations by the end of the period covered by this report, and there was little evidence that the new regulations have themselves expanded religious freedom, in part because unregistered religious

organizations have not been able to register under the RRA without first affiliations with a PRA. Before the passage of the RRA, a few Protestant groups reportedly registered independently of the TSPM/CCC. These included the Little Flock Protestant churches in Zhejiang and the (Korean) Chaoyang Church in Jilin Province. It was not clear whether these religious groups affiliated with the TSPM/CCC or whether they registered independently. The (Russian) Orthodox Church has been able to operate without affiliating with a PRA in a few areas.

While the activities of unregistered religious groups remained outside the scope of the RRA's legal protection, these groups and their activities continued to expand. Most Christian groups, the majority of which are not members of the PRAs, no longer operated in strict secrecy. Instead, they carried out public activities, including convening seminars, publishing materials, renting space for offices and events, and disseminating information on the Internet. Church summer camps and weekend retreats are also popular. Many unregistered religious groups also carried out social service work.

Both SARA and the TSPM/CCC state that registration regulations do not require that a congregation join either the TSPM or the CCC; however, nearly all local RAB officials require registered Protestant congregations and clergy to affiliate with the TSPM/CCC. Some unregistered religious groups who attempted to register were told by the RAB that their clergy did not have the requisite TSPM/CCC credentials. Other groups reported that authorities denied their applications without cause or detained group members who met with officials when they attempted to register. The Government contended that these refusals were the result of these groups' lack of adequate facilities or failure to meet other legal requirements.

Some unregistered Protestant groups refuse to register or affiliate with the TSPM/CCC because the TSPM/CCC puts submission to the CCP over submission to God. In particular, some house churches have objected to the TSPM's restrictions on evangelizing to or baptizing those under 18 and receiving religious materials from abroad, as well as its instructions to uphold Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. Moreover, some groups disagreed with the TSPM/CCC teachings that differences in the tenets of different Protestant creeds can be reconciled or accommodated under one "post-denominational" religious umbrella organization. Others did not seek registration independently or with one of the PRAs due to fear of adverse consequences if they revealed, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders or members. Unregistered groups also frequently did not affiliate with one of the PRAs for fear that doing so would allow government authorities to control sermon content and speakers.

A religious group may seek registration as "a religious organization" or as a "venue for religious activity." According to RRA Chapter 3, Article 13, a religious group must first obtain registration as a "religious organization" in order to obtain registration as a "religious venue." However, SARA has stated that in principle any unregistered group may register a venue without first becoming registered as a religious organization.

According to RRA Chapter 2, Article 6, registration as a "religious organization" is governed by the "Regulations on the Management of Registration of Social Organizations" (RSO) which are administered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA). There are six requirements for registration under the RSO. These requirements are: 50 individual members or 30 institutional members, or a total of 50 members if there are both individual and institutional members; a standard name and organizational capacity; a fixed location; a staff with qualifications appropriate to the activities to the organization; lawful assets and a source of funds (i.e., national level organizations must have a minimum of \$14,620 (100,000 RMB) and local social and inter-area social organizations must have a minimum of \$4,381 (30,000 RMB); and legal liability in its own right. SARA has stated that there may only be one recognized organization per religion. The TSPM is the only registered Protestant religious organization registered under the RSO.

Registration of a venue must take place according to RRA Chapter 3, which lists five requirements in Chapter 3, Article 14: establishment of a site consistent with the overall purpose of the RRA which must not be used to "disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state," or be "subject to any foreign domination;" local religious citizens must have a need to carry out collective religious activities frequently; there must be religious personnel qualified to preside over the activities; the site must have the "necessary funds;" and the site must be "rationally located" so as not to interfere with normal production and neighboring residents. According to RRA Chapter 4, Article 27, clergy must report to the appropriate RAB after being certified by the concerned PRA.

A growing number of religious groups that have chosen to affiliate with a registered venue of the TSPM were now able to meet legally under the supervision of the venue.

Religious groups that remain unaffiliated and unregistered continued to be vulnerable to government interference. In September 2007 the Beijing municipal public security bureau (PSB) passed a regulation prohibiting landlords from renting properties to persons with "irregular lifestyles," including those who conduct illegal religious activities. Several house church groups reported that they were forced to change locations for their meetings after Beijing authorities threatened landlords with punishment for renting to them.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Government banned groups that it determined to be "cults"--the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin, or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), and Zhong Gong (a qigong exercise discipline). The Government also considers several Protestant Christian groups to be cults, including the "Shouters" (founded in the United States in 1962), Eastern Lightning, Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), Full Scope Church, Spirit Sect, New Testament Church, Three Grades of Servants (also known as San Ba Pu Ren), Association of Disciples, Lord God Sect, Established King Church, Unification Church, Family of Love, and South China Church. In 1999 the Government banned the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

Under Article 300 of the criminal law, "cult" members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications may be sentenced to 3 to 7 years in prison, while "cult" leaders and recruiters may be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison.

Under the RRA, registered religious organizations may compile and print materials for their internal use. However, if they plan to distribute their materials publicly, they must follow national printing regulations, which restrict the publication and distribution of literature with religious content.

The 1994 Provisions Regarding the Administration of Contracts to Print Bible Texts named the Nanjing Amity Printing Company (Amity Press) as the sole printer for domestic Bibles. A few CPA dioceses which have their own presses reportedly print the Catholic Bible. Amity Press is a nonprofit organization, and Bibles are sold through TSPM and CPA churches, which are also nonprofit organizations. Several other officially designated printing companies print other Catholic religious materials.

RRA Article 35 permits registered religious groups to accept donations from organizations and individuals both inside and outside the country. The RRA states that funds collected must be used for activities "that conform to the purpose of the religious group or place of religious activity." RAB officials may redress violations.

The work of faith-based nonprofit organizations continued to expand rapidly and the Government increased its public support for these efforts. Amity Foundation, a state-approved Protestant-affiliated group registered as a charity at the national level (which allows it to receive tax-free charitable donations), was very active. Amity's Catholic counterpart, Beifang Jinde Social Services Center in Hebei Province, was also expanding. Caritas, the social services branch of the Catholic Church, operated in a few dioceses under the supervision of the CPA. House church groups and other unregistered religious groups are ineligible to receive tax free status since they do not have legal standing. Nonetheless, growing numbers of smaller-scale organizations have emerged from church congregations. Registered and unregistered faith-based organizations ran clinics, homes for the elderly, orphanages, and social centers. Many had established good working relationships with local authorities and were able to assist the aid work of the Government which often has extremely limited capacity to provide services. Because of their legal status, however, unregistered groups, continued to be vulnerable to actions taken by authorities to interfere with them or shut them down.

Under the RRA, the Government limits Hajj travel to Mecca to tours sponsored by the Muslim PRA, the Islamic Association of China (IAC).

According to reports, some religious adherents opposed the state's family planning policy for reasons of religious belief and practice. The Roman Catholic Church forbids abortions and the use of artificial contraception. Many Protestant leaders also teach that abortion violates the Biblical commandment not to kill. Some Muslims believe that children are a gift from Allah and that abortion is therefore wrong. In some areas of the country, government population control agencies required women to use contraception, be sterilized, and have abortions if their pregnancies violated government population control regulations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom remained poor, and controls tightened in some areas, including in Tibetan areas, the XUAR, and Beijing. Some house churches reported that they were told by authorities not to meet during the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. One religious freedom nongovernmental organization (NGO) alleged that authorities demanded at least one house church to sign a written agreement that it would not hold services during the specified period. Following the March 14 outbreak of violence in Lhasa, Chinese government officials and state media increased their vilification of the Dalai Lama, including public accusations that the Dalai Lama incited rioting by Tibetans.

The Government perceived unregulated religious gatherings or groups as a potential challenge to its authority and attempted to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the CCP. In some regions, government supervision of religious activity was minimal, with registered and unregistered churches existing openly and receiving similar treatment by the authorities. In other regions, local officials supervised religion strictly, and authorities placed pressure on unregistered churches. Local regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce government policy regarding unregistered churches and illegal religious activities.

There were reports of repression of unregistered Protestant church networks and house churches during the reporting period. In some areas, government authorities pressured house churches to affiliate with one of the PRAs and to register with religious affairs authorities by organizing registration campaigns and by detaining and interrogating leaders who refused to register. In other parts of the country unregistered groups grew rapidly and the authorities did not pressure them to register.

The website of SARA states that family and friends holding meetings at home (as distinct from formal worship services in public venues) need not register with the Government (the "Family and Friend Worship Policy"). However, there were many reports that police and officials of local Religious Affairs Bureaus (RABs) disrupted home worship meetings claiming that participants disturbed neighbors or social order, or belonged to an "evil cult." Police sometimes detained worshippers attending such services for hours or days and prevented further worship activities. Police interrogated church leaders and laypersons about their worship activities at locations including meeting sites, hotel rooms, and detention centers. NGOs reported that church leaders faced harsher treatment than members, including greater frequency and length of detention, formal arrest, and reeducation-through-labor or imprisonment. According to NGO and media reports, in some cases local officials also confiscated and destroyed the property of unregistered religious groups.

Some unregistered religious groups had significant membership, properties, financial resources, and networks. House churches encountered difficulties when their membership grew, when they arranged for the regular use of facilities for the purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forged links with other unregistered groups or with coreligionists overseas. Urban house churches were sometimes limited to meetings of a few dozen members or less, while meetings of unregistered Protestants in small cities and rural areas could number in the hundreds openly and with the knowledge of local authorities.

Authorities in Shanghai implemented measures to prevent Catholic pilgrims from visiting the Marian Shrine of Sheshan during May. CPA authorities advised registered church members in the Shanghai diocese, where the shrine is located, to avoid gathering at the shrine in May, while the local PSB instituted traffic restrictions en route to the shrine, and CPA authorities outside Shanghai urged Catholics not to make pilgrimages to other provinces during the month.

Citizens are not permitted to attend religious services conducted by foreigners unless they take place in an authorized venue under the supervision of a registered religious group. Citizens were not allowed to attend expatriate worship services. However, foreigners were occasionally invited to preach at TSPM services. On May 11, 2008, the Reverend Franklin Graham spoke to an audience of approximately 12,000 at the Chong-Yi church in Hangzhou. The Regulations on the Religious Activities of Foreigners forbid proselytizing but do not prohibit foreigners from attending worship services at registered religious venues. Many expatriate Christian groups throughout the country have developed close ties with local officials, in some cases operating schools

and homes for the care of the elderly.

Although the Government authorized funding to build new places of worship for registered venues, the number of temples, churches, and mosques has not kept pace with growth in the number of worshippers. For example, in Beijing, a city of 17 million, there are only 13 registered Protestant churches. Some registered churches faced difficulty registering new church venues.

The Government continued to harshly repress religious groups designated as cults, including the Falun Gong. As in past years, local authorities took steps to repress unregistered religious groups that grew quickly or publicly rejected the Government's authority. Official tolerance for groups associated with Buddhism and Taoism has been greater than that for groups associated with other religions. The Government labeled folk religions as "feudal superstition," and in the past there were reports that followers sometimes were subject to harassment and repression.

There was a severe shortage of trained clergy for both registered and unregistered religious groups. Official religious organizations administered local religious schools, seminaries, and institutes to train priests, ministers, imams, Islamic scholars, and Buddhist monks. Students who attended these institutes had to demonstrate "political reliability," and all graduates must pass an examination on their political, as well as theological, knowledge to qualify for the clergy.

Leaders of both registered and unregistered religious groups stated that training opportunities for clergy were inadequate. The shortage of training opportunities in the country has resulted in the creation of informal "field seminaries," lay leadership training programs, and online training resources for Chinese Christians. Some critics of the Government's policies on religion saw a lack of educational opportunities for mainstream clergy and the lack of access to religious texts and supplementary readings as factors that lead some religious groups to develop unorthodox, or what the Government characterizes as "cultlike," beliefs. Academics also reported that the Government's "patriotic education campaigns," which included compulsory political education in Tibetan monasteries, sometimes interfered with normal religious studies.

The Government began allowing Dallas Theological Seminary to introduce online courses for clergy through TSPM-run Yanjing Seminary. The Government also allowed an increasing number of PRA-approved Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and some Buddhist monks to travel abroad for additional religious study. In practice, some had difficulty obtaining passports or approval to study abroad.

In March 2005 a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the country had no national regulations preventing children from receiving religious instruction but religion should not interfere with public education. However, Article 14 of the Xinjiang Implementing Measures of the Law on the Protection of Minors still states that "parents or other guardians may not permit minors to be engaged in religious activities." Schools in the XUAR reportedly require students to attend mandatory classes on Friday, effectively preventing them from attending Friday prayer at the mosque. Regulations in Tibetan areas set the minimum age of admission to monasteries at 18.

XUAR authorities continued to restrict Muslim religious activity, sometimes citing counterterrorism as the basis for taking repressive action. In recent years XUAR authorities detained and formally arrested persons engaged in unauthorized religious activities and charged them with a range of offenses, including state security crimes. They often charged religious believers with committing the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Because authorities often did not distinguish carefully among those involved in peaceful activities in support of independence, "illegal" religious activities, and violent terrorism, it was often difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those peacefully seeking political goals, those seeking to worship, or those engaged in violence.

The Government reportedly continued to detain Uighur Muslim citizens for possession of unauthorized religious texts, imprison them for religious activities determined to be "extremist," and prevent them from observing certain sacred religious traditions. Compared to other provinces and autonomous regions, the XUAR government maintained the severest legal restrictions on a child's right to practice religion, and XUAR authorities in a few areas prohibited women, children, CCP members, and government workers from entering mosques. Tight controls on religion in the XUAR reportedly affected followers of other religions as well.

The Government of the XUAR often prohibited public expressions of faith by teachers, professors, and university students, including during Ramadan. Some local officials reportedly called on schools to strengthen propaganda education during Ramadan and put a stop to activities including fasting and professing a religion.

According to media reports, a series of demonstrations in and near Hotan City, XUAR, took place on March 23-24, 2008. Nearly 600 protestors, the majority of whom were women, reportedly demanded that authorities abandon a proposed ban on headscarves and release political prisoners. Authorities denied that the protests were related to headscarves or religious practice. Instead, authorities claimed individuals with connections to the pan-Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir organization were responsible for the protests.

The Government attempted to restrict Hajj travel to IAC-sponsored Hajj tours. Some Uighur Muslims sought passage to Mecca from points outside the country for a variety of reasons, including cost savings, to avoid cumbersome restrictions and procedural requirements, or to avoid tests of "patriotism" by the Government. Due to increased numbers of Muslim pilgrims traveling to Mecca from third countries, the Government intensified efforts to restrict unofficial Hajj tours during the reporting period. In 2007 XUAR Party Secretary Wang Lequan stated that "new situations" and "new problems" compelled the Government to "step up the control of pilgrimages, severely attack the organizers of illegal pilgrimages, take forceful measures to put a stop to dispersed pilgrimages, and protect the personal interests of the masses from every ethnic group." In 2007, foreign media reported that XUAR officials confiscated the passports of more than 2,000 Uighur Muslims in an effort to prevent unauthorized Hajj pilgrimages. Foreign media reported that some Uighur Muslims were told they would have to pay a deposit of \$6,600 dollars (45,195 RMB) to retrieve their passports for overseas travel.

According to reports, government authorities attempted to restrict Hajj participation by Uighur men to those between the ages of 50 and 70, arbitrarily detained some Uighur Muslims to prevent them from going on the Hajj, required Uighur pilgrims to show that their Hajj travel funds were not borrowed from other sources, and required Uighur pilgrims to pass a health test. There were no other reports of limitations on Hajj travel for other Chinese citizens. Official reports stated that, of a total of 10,700 Chinese Muslims on the 2007 Hajj pilgrimage, 2,700 were Uighur Muslims, a decrease from 3,100 in 2006.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, Communist Party membership is required for almost all high-level positions in government, state-owned businesses, and many official organizations. The CCP has stated that party members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion. The "Routine Service Regulations" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities."

Nonetheless, a growing number of Communist Party members have become Christians. Some Communist Party officials engage in religious activity, most commonly Buddhism or a folk religion. Leaders of government-approved religious groups, which are included in national and local government organizations to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters, may be members of the CCP.

The five PRAs publish religious literature and state-run publishing houses published religious materials. However, the Government limited printing of the Bible to Amity Press and to a few presses affiliated with CPA dioceses which publish the Catholic Bible. Bibles so produced could be purchased only at TSPM or CPA churches. The Government authorized publishers (other than Amity Press) to publish at least a thousand Christian titles. Amity has published more than forty million Bibles for the Chinese readership and distributes them through a network of 70 urban distribution points and a mobile distribution network that travels to rural areas. Increasing interest in Christianity produced a corresponding increase in demand for Bibles and other Christian literature, and members of unregistered churches reported that the supply and distribution of Bibles was inadequate, particularly in rural locations. Individuals could not order Bibles directly from publishing houses, and distributors were sometimes wary of unfavorable attention that might attend orders for purchases of large volumes of Bibles. The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) stated on its website for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games that visitors should bring no more than one Bible per person.

Under the RRA and regulations on publishing, religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles and Qur'ans, may be confiscated and unauthorized publishing houses closed. Religious adherents are subject

to arrest and imprisonment for illegal publishing. Authorities often confiscated Bibles in raids on house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor the importation of Bibles and other religious materials. In the XUAR, government authorities also at times restricted the buying and selling of the Qu'ran.

The Government and the Holy See have not established diplomatic relations, and there was no Vatican representative in the country. The role of the Pope in selecting bishops, the status of underground Catholic clerics, and Vatican recognition of Taiwan remained obstacles to improved relations. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson stated that the Government advocated improvement in relations.

The CPA does not recognize the authority of the Holy See to appoint bishops; however, it allowed the Vatican's discreet input in selecting some bishops. In September 2007 Xiao Zejiang, a member of the Guizhou Provincial People's Political Consultative Congress, was ordained as coadjutor bishop of the Guizhou Diocese. Bishop Xiao's ordination was the first of five ordinations approved both by Beijing and the Vatican following the June 2007 letter of Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholic Church in China on reconciliation. An estimated 90 percent of official Catholic bishops have reconciled with the Vatican. Likewise, the large majority of Catholic bishops appointed by the Government have received official approval from the Vatican through "apostolic mandates."

The distinction between the official Catholic Church, which the Government controls politically, and the unregistered Catholic Church has become less clear over time. In some official Catholic churches, clerics led prayers for the Pope, and pictures of the Pope were displayed.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, officials continued to scrutinize, and in some cases, harass unregistered religious and spiritual groups. In some areas government officials abused the rights of members of unregistered Protestant and Catholic groups, Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of groups that the Government determined to be "cults," especially the Falun Gong. Reports of abuse of religious freedom in the XUAR, Tibetan areas, and Beijing increased during the reporting period.

The Government detained, arrested, or sentenced to prison terms many religious leaders and adherents for activities related to their religious practice; however, the Government denied detaining or arresting anyone solely because of his or her religion. Local authorities often used an administrative process, through which citizens may be sentenced by a nonjudicial panel of police and local authorities to up to 3 years in reeducation-through-labor camps, to punish members of unregistered religious groups. During the reporting period, the Government reportedly held many religious adherents and members of spiritual movements in reeducation-through-labor camps because of their religious beliefs. In some areas security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion, interrogation, detention, physical attacks, and torture to harass leaders of unauthorized groups and their followers.

Offenses related to membership in unregistered religious groups are often classified as crimes of disturbing the social order. Religious leaders and worshippers, however, faced criminal and administrative punishment on a wide range of charges, including those related to the Government's refusal to allow members of unregistered groups to assemble, travel, and publish freely or in connection with its ban on public proselytizing. During the reporting period, the Government also used the charge of conducting illegal business operations to detain leaders of unregistered religious groups.

A number of Protestant Christians who worshipped outside of government-approved venues, including in their homes, continued to face detention and abuse, especially for attempting to meet in large groups, traveling within and outside of the country for religious meetings, and otherwise holding peaceful religious assemblies in unregistered venues. According to overseas NGOs, raids by police and other security officials on Protestant religious meetings intensified during the reporting period.

In June 2008 several prominent religious leaders were harassed, placed under surveillance, restricted to their homes, or forced to leave Beijing during the visit of a delegation of foreign officials. These leaders included religious freedom attorneys Li Baiguang and Li Heping and Christian writer Yu Jie. Police also forced Pastor Zhang Mingxuan, president of the China House Church Alliance (CHCA), a network of house church groups

that reportedly has 300,000 members, and his wife to relocate from Beijing to Hebei Province after they met with members of the visiting delegation. Authorities also reportedly ordered several Christian leaders to leave Beijing until after the Olympics.

On September 22, 2007, authorities detained Christian lawyer Gao Zhisheng shortly after a letter he wrote to a foreign government, addressing human rights and religious freedom issues, became public. Gao's current whereabouts were unknown at the end of the reporting period. In December 2006 the Government convicted Gao of "inciting subversion" for sending a letter to President Hu Jintao detailing abuses against Falun Gong practitioners.

Overseas Christian groups continued to report increasing pressure on expatriate Christians in the lead up to the 2008 Summer Olympics. Beginning in spring 2007, the Government expelled foreign Christians. Foreign media reported that the total number of expulsions exceeded one hundred. The Government detained and interrogated several expatriate Christians and charged them with "illegal religious activities" for reportedly holding religious discussions and distributing religious materials to local citizens. Some Christian expatriates were forced to abandon significant financial investments.

The Government reportedly arrested two Uighur Christian employees of foreign-owned companies that were scrutinized for "illegal religious activities." On October 9, 2007, the Kashgar Municipal Bureau for Ethnic Affairs told Alimujiang Yimiti, a Uighur Christian employed by a British-owned company, that he had violated provisions of the 2005 RRA, the "Explanation of the Regulations on Not Permitting Christians to Engage in House Church Religious Activities" promulgated by the UFWD, and the "Notice on Strengthening Administration Work on Christianity" promulgated by the XUAR Party Committee of the UFWD. In January 2008 Kashgar authorities arrested Yimiti on charges of "engaging in illegal religious activities in the name of business" and preaching Christianity to ethnic Uighurs, according to the NGO. On May 27, 2008, the Kashgar District Intermediate People's Court tried Yimiti on the charge of "endangering national security." According to an NGO report the Government closed Yimiti's company on suspicion of "foreign religious infiltration." The Kashgar court sent his case back to prosecutors due to "insufficient evidence."

According to the NGO, on November 27, 2007, XUAR authorities sentenced another Uighur Christian, Wusiman Yiming, who worked for an American-owned company, to 2 years of reeducation through labor. The owner of the company, an American Christian, was expelled from China and the company was shut down. The Reeducation through Labor Committee that sentenced Wusiman Yiming accused him of "assisting foreigners with illegal religious activities."

Authorities in the XUAR and other provinces continued to interrupt house church services and detain laypersons and leaders.

According to NGO reports, on June 24, 2008, several police officers reportedly detained three persons at a house church at Honghui Coal Mine in Pingchuan District, Baiyin City, Gansu Province. On June 25, two more persons were detained at the same location. They were sentenced to administrative detention between 3 and 10 days and fined \$145 (1,000 RMB).

On May 25, 2008, the Beijing Gospel Church, a "house church" with a membership of more than 1,000, was raided by officials from four government agencies, including the Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs, according to an NGO. Officials searched the homes of church members without documentation and confiscated religious materials. Some of the church members reported minor injuries from mistreatment by officials. Pastor Gao Zhen was detained for hours, interrogated and then released.

On May 16, 2008, XUAR police detained Pastor Lou Yuanqi on suspicion of inciting separatism. Police repeatedly detained Pastor Lou for organizing house church activities.

On May 11, 2008, uniformed policemen and plain-clothes detectives raided the worship service at Shouwang Church in Beijing. Authorities from Haidian District Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs ordered the church to stop meeting and forced members to leave the premises. According to NGO reports, the Government rejected the church's attempts to register with the Beijing RAB and with the Beijing Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2007 and 2008 because the church's clergy was not TSPM-trained.

On May 2, 2008, PSB and RAB authorities raided the gathering of more than 40 members of the Chengdu Qiuyu Blessings Church near Shuangliu, Chengdu. The authorities questioned whether the gathering had been properly registered and told participants they were "suspected of being involved in illegal religious practices." The officials also confiscated Bibles, hymnals, and religious education materials.

On April 13, 2008, XUAR police took 46 Christians into custody who were worshipping at the home of Ding Zhichun in Shache County, Kashgar, XUAR. Authorities reportedly forced the Christians to confess to illegal worship activities and to study the Government's handbook on religious policy. Forty-four were released following payment of a fine. The Government sentenced two church members to 15 days of administrative detention. Authorities detained nine house church members in March 2008 in Qu County, Sichuan Province, on suspicion of "using an evil cult to obstruct the enforcement of the law."

On December 7, 2007, authorities in Shandong Province's Linyi City raided a gathering of 270 leaders of unregistered Christian groups and detained 21 who were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor terms ranging from 1 to 3 years for belonging to an "evil cult."

On January 23, 2007, officials allegedly beat members of a house church in Kunming, Yunnan who protested against the seizing and burning of Christian books, including Bibles, by Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau officials on December 5, 2007.

On November 18, 2007, PSB officers in Henan detained 40 church leaders from the China Gospel Fellowship for up to 15 days. Families of the leaders were reportedly required to cover living expenses at the detention center.

In June 2006 police in Langzhong City, Sichuan Province, detained eight house church Christians. Four leaders of the church and three additional members were detained when they went to inquire about those detained at the public security office. House church members claimed they were beaten by police; the four leaders of the group who were detained were sentenced to 2 years of reeducation-through-labor. They were due for release at the end of July 2008.

Prominent house church leaders and their family members continued to serve time in prison.

In September 2007 an overseas NGO reported that Christian pastor Zhang Rongliang's health continued to deteriorate in prison. He was sentenced in June 2006 to 7 years and 6 months in prison on charges of obtaining a fraudulent passport and crossing the border illegally. On July 27, 2007, Beijing house church activist Hua Huiqi was released from prison. Hua had been detained on "suspicion of interfering with public duties" and was formally arrested by Beijing PSB's Chaoyang Branch on February 8, 2007. In April 2007 the Beijing Intermediate People's Court rejected the appeal of Hua's 76-year-old mother, Shuang Shuying, who was sentenced to 2 years in jail for destruction of public and private property. Hua alleged that government authorities imprisoned Shuang in an attempt to pressure him into providing information to the Government about individuals who visited him.

House church groups involved in efforts to provide relief to victims of the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake reported Government interference in their efforts.

On June 1, 2008, police reportedly raided a house church meeting in Taikang County, Henan Province and interrogated participants about which church members would deliver donations to the earthquake area. Six members were held in detention under the charge of being members of an "evil cult." Police and religious affairs officials stated they would not release them until they each paid a \$144 (1,000 RMB) fine. According to an overseas NGO, on May 28, 2008, two Christians in Hua County, Henan Province were detained and questioned about their earthquake relief efforts. Authorities later accused them of "illegal religious activities." One was released on June 2 after paying a \$75 (513 RMB) dollar penalty and providing gifts worth nearly \$600 (4,103 RMB) dollars to PSB officers; the other was released on June 3.

The Government detained a number of individuals on charges relating to illegal publication of religious materials.

On June 24, 2008, the Government extended the detention of Beijing bookstore owner Shi Weihai, who was taken into police custody on March 19, 2008, for 2 months. Shi was initially detained in November 2007 for the illegal publication of Bibles and Christian literature, but authorities released him in January 2008 due to "insufficient evidence." PSB officials have reportedly denied him contact with his family since March and Shi was not granted access to his lawyer until April 2008. On May 9, 2008, police arrested Pastor Dong Yutao, a leader of Beijing City Revival Church, while he was going to collect a shipment of Bibles. Beijing Public Security Bureau officials placed Dong under criminal detention for receiving illegally printed Bibles and religious literature. On February 19, 2008, house church leader Zhou Heng was released from prison. Zhou had been imprisoned on August 31, 2007, for importing three tons of Bibles from South Korea. In September 2007 Protestant Pastor Cai Zhuohua was released from prison after serving a three and a half year sentence for large-scale publishing of Bibles and Christian literature without government approval. Following his release, government authorities reportedly harassed Cai.

The Government also arrested some individuals on charges of illegal proselytism.

On May 4, 2008, government officials raided the Loyalty Christian Church of Yanji led by Pastor Hao Yujie, according to an overseas NGO. Authorities took Hao for questioning and reportedly beat her in custody. The Government charged her with organizing an illegal religious gathering in violation of Article 33 of the "Regulations on Religious Affairs of Jilin Province." Citing Article 50 of "Regulations on Religious Affairs of Jilin Province," the Government abolished the Loyalty Christian Church of Yanji and ordered Hao to cease her proselytizing activities. In February 2008 Gu Changrong and Gu Zhaozhong, members of the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), were released after serving 1-year terms of reeducation-through-labor for allegedly proselytizing a Communist Party member.

Some individuals opposed coercive family planning policies because of their religious beliefs.

In April 2007 Radio Free Asia reported that family planning officials in Baise, Guangxi Province, forced Wei Linrong, the wife of house church pastor Liang Yage, to have an abortion. According to the report, Liang and his wife did not want to have an abortion because it violated their religious beliefs.

In some locations, local authorities reportedly forced unregistered Catholic priests and believers to renounce ordinations approved by the Holy See, join the official church, or face a variety of punishments including fines, job loss, detentions, and having their children barred from school. Ongoing harassment of unregistered bishops and priests was reported, including government surveillance and repeated short detentions. Numerous detentions of unofficial Catholic clergy were reported, in particular in Hebei Province, traditionally home to many unregistered Catholics.

In September 2007 underground Catholic bishop Han Dingxiang, who reportedly suffered from cancer, and had been under house arrest and other forms of detention for nearly 8 years, died at a hospital while under police custody. In August 2007 Bishop Jia Zhiguo was reportedly detained and held without charge until December 14, 2007; he has been detained more than ten times since 2004.

The whereabouts of Zhouzhi bishop Wu Qijing remain unknown. Auxiliary Bishop of Xiwanzi diocese, Hebei Province, Yao Liang, remained in detention during the reporting period. Father Li Huisheng who was reportedly tortured by police in August 2006 remained in custody serving a 7-year term of imprisonment for "inciting the masses against the Government."

The Government sought the forcible return of several Uighur Muslims from other countries, some of whom had reportedly protested limits on the Hajj and encouraged prayer and fasting by fellow Muslims. In the fall of 2006 an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 Uighur Muslims traveled to Islamabad, Pakistan to apply for Hajj visas at the Saudi Arabian Embassy. The Saudi Embassy reportedly rejected some of the visa applications because of an agreement with the Government stipulating that Chinese Muslims could undertake a Hajj pilgrimage only with IAC-organized groups. According to NGO reports, in July 2007 Pakistan reportedly arrested and forcibly returned to the country Osman Alihan, a Uighur Muslim businessman who participated in protests against Hajj restrictions. That same month the Government of Saudi Arabia also reportedly arrested and forcibly returned Habibulla Ali, a Uighur Muslim who discussed the hajj restrictions with other Uighur Muslims in Saudi Arabia, according to NGO reports.

Ablikim and Alim Kadeer, sons of Uighur Muslim activist Rebiya Kadeer, continued to serve 9- and 7-year prison terms, respectively, on charges related to state security and economic crimes. They were arrested days after Rebiya Kadeer was elected president of the Uyghur American Association.

On June 23, 2008, media stated that a mosque near Aksu City in the XUAR was demolished. A representative of the World Uighur Congress claimed that the congregation of the mosque was accused of illegally renovating the structure, carrying out illegal religious activities, and illegally storing copies of the Qur'an. A spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the structure was not a mosque.

In June 2008 the Government of Malaysia forcibly returned to the country two Hui Muslims, one of whom expressed concern over treatment of Muslims in Tianjin.

According to Falun Gong practitioners abroad, since 1999 more than 100,000 practitioners have been detained for engaging in Falun Gong practices, admitting that they adhere to the teachings of Falun Gong, or refusing to criticize the organization or its founder. The organization reported that its members have been subject to excessive force, abuse, rape, detention, forcible psychiatric commitment and treatment (including involuntary medication and electric shock treatment), and torture, and that some members, including children, have died in custody. Practitioners who refused to recant their beliefs were sometimes subjected to extrajudicial "legal education" centers after the expiration of their criminal sentences.

Overseas Falun Gong organizations alleged a surge in arrests and deaths of Falun Gong practitioners carried out in order to prevent disturbance during the Olympic Games. Reports of abuse were difficult to confirm because the Government prevented Falun Gong members from meeting with foreign reporters and government officials. These organizations also reported that the Government harassed their members in other countries, including the United States, through threatening phone calls and physical harassment. The Government frequently used harsh rhetoric against the Falun Gong. Some foreign observers estimated that at least half of the 250,000 officially recorded inmates in the country's reeducation-through-labor camps were Falun Gong adherents. Falun Gong sources overseas placed the number even higher. For a more detailed discussion, see the *2007 Human Rights Report*.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government continued to emphasize the role of religion in promoting a "harmonious society," allowed the PRAs to expand their cooperation with religious groups in other countries, and funded the building of some new places for worship by registered religious groups. The Government allowed foreign and domestic religious groups to increase cooperation on religious education and charitable work. The Government has granted approval for an increasing number of religious books to be published by officially approved publishers.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

In some parts of the country, there was a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Protestant churches and, according to press reports, between members of unregistered Protestant church groups. There were also tensions between unregistered and official Catholic communities in some provinces, including Hebei. Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists complained about the presence of Christian missionaries in their communities. Christian leaders reported some friction in rural areas between adherents of folk religions and Christians who object to some folk religion practices. Religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, experienced societal discrimination because of their religious beliefs and their status as ethnic minorities with distinct languages and cultures. Conflicts among ethnic groups in Tibetan areas, including Han, Hui, Tibetan Buddhists, and Tibetan Muslims escalated during the reporting period. These tensions were related to religious as well as socioeconomic and cultural issues. There were reports that the Government's vilification of the Dalai Lama led to increased anti-Tibetan Buddhist sentiment throughout

the country (see appendix for additional information).

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

President George W. Bush and senior U.S. officials consistently call upon the Government to respect international standards for religious freedom. President Bush raised religious freedom with the Government, including at the September 2007 APEC summit in Sydney, Australia. President Bush also met with religious freedom activists, including Christian lawyers Li Heping and Li Baiguang, in June 2008.

U.S. officials regularly raise religious freedom issues with government leaders, including calling for the release of religious prisoners, the reform of restrictive registration laws, and more freedom for religious groups to practice their faith. The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor raised religious freedom issues during the May 2008 U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue in Beijing and met with religious freedom activists in Washington, D.C.

In the wake of the March 2008 events in Tibet, Secretary of State Rice issued a statement calling on the Government to address policies that had created tensions due to their impact on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods.

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the consulates general in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom in the country. U.S. officials condemned abuses while supporting positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. representatives consistently urged both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom and release all those serving prison sentences for religious activities. U.S. officials protested vigorously whenever there were credible reports of religious harassment or discrimination in violation of international laws and standards, and they requested information in cases of alleged mistreatment in which the facts were incomplete or contradictory. On numerous occasions the Department of State, the Embassy, and the consulates general protested government actions to curb freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, including the arrests of Falun Gong followers, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, and Catholic and Protestant clergy and laypersons. The Embassy routinely raised cases of detention and abuse of religious practitioners with appropriate Government officials.

At the same time, U.S. officials argued to the country's leaders that freedom of religion would strengthen, not harm, the country. U.S. officials encouraged the Government to support the growth of faith-based aid by both legally registered and unregistered religious groups and to loosen government controls on religious practice.

The Embassy and consulates general also collected information about abuses and maintained contacts with a wide spectrum of religious leaders within religious communities, including bishops, priests, and ministers of the official Christian and Catholic churches, as well as Taoist, Muslim, Tibetan Buddhist and other Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also met with leaders and members of unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts included experts on religion in the country, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States.

The Department of State brought a number of religious leaders and scholars to the United States on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in U.S. society.

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Ambassador to China highlighted problems of religious freedom and cases of individual religious prisoners of conscience in his public speeches and in his private diplomacy with senior officials. Officials from the Embassy and consulates general met with government officials responsible for religion and with clergy or practitioners in official and unofficial religious groups.

Since 1999 the Secretary of State has designated the country as a CPC under the IRFA for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Economic measures in effect against the country under the IRFA relate to restriction of exports of crime control and detection instruments and equipment (Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, P.L. 101-246).

TIBET

The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan autonomous prefectures (TAPs) and counties in other provinces to be a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The U.S. Department of State follows these designations in its reporting. The preservation and development of the Tibetan people's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage, as well as the protection of their fundamental human rights, continue to be of concern.

The PRC's Constitution provides for freedom of religion but limits protection of the exercise of religious belief to activities that the Government defines as "normal." The Government's 2005 White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom of religious belief of ethnic minorities, and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities." Although the authorities permitted many traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they maintained tight control on religious practices and places of worship. They promptly and forcibly suppressed activities that they viewed as vehicles for political dissent or advocacy of Tibetan independence, such as religious activities venerating the Dalai Lama, whom the Government continued to characterize as a separatist.

During the period covered by this report, the level of religious repression in the TAR and other Tibetan areas increased. Some of the Government's increased restrictions on religious freedom during the reporting period included interference with the process of selecting and training reincarnate lamas, stricter control over the ability of monks and nuns to travel between monasteries, and limits on the construction or renovation of monasteries. The Government also strengthened "patriotic education" campaigns in the monasteries, which required monks and nuns to spend several hours a day studying communist political texts and sign statements personally denouncing the Dalai Lama.

The patriotic education campaigns and other restrictions on religious freedom were major factors that led monks and nuns from a number of monasteries to mount peaceful protests in Lhasa on March 10, 2008. On March 14-15, the protests and security response devolved into rioting by Tibetans and a violent police crackdown in Lhasa. Additional protests, most led by monks and nuns, spread to nearly all Tibetan areas outside of Lhasa, with more than one hundred protests taking place in the following months. Estimates of the number of monks and nuns detained in the wake of the unrest varied between hundreds and thousands. The Government's respect for religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas deteriorated severely after the outbreak of violence in Lhasa on March 14. Following the unrest, authorities locked down monasteries as well as detained and physically abused an unknown number of monks and nuns, or expelled them from monasteries throughout Tibetan areas. The Government expanded and intensified patriotic education campaigns in monasteries and nunneries, prompting new rounds of protests throughout Tibetan areas specifically against this forced education. Government officials also increased harsh criticism of the Dalai Lama.

Societal abuses and discrimination that occurred between religious groups in Tibetan areas were also related to ethnic conflicts, economic disparities, and the lack of opportunities for advancement for Tibetan Buddhists. The March 14 rioting by Tibetans in Lhasa resulted in damage to government buildings, Han and Hui businesses and property, and a mosque.

The U.S. Government continued to encourage greater religious freedom by urging the PRC Government and local authorities to respect religious freedom and preserve religious traditions. The U.S. Government protested credible reports of religious persecution and discrimination, discussed individual cases with the authorities, and requested further information about specific incidents. Following the March 14 violence in Lhasa, the U.S. Government urged the PRC Government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives and to address policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions due to their impact on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods.

Section I. Religious Demography

Tibetan areas total 871,649 square miles. According to the 2000 census, the Tibetan population within the TAR was 2.4 million out of a total permanently registered population of 2.8 million, while in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan, the Tibetan population was 2.9 million. Most practiced Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority also practiced Bon, the related traditional Tibetan religion. This held true for many Tibetan government officials and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, even though the CCP and the Government prohibited officials from practicing religion.

Other residents of Tibetan areas include ethnic Han Chinese, who practiced Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and traditional folk religions; Hui Muslims; ethnic Tibetan Muslims; and Christians. There are mosques in the TAR with approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Muslim adherents, as well as a Catholic church with 560 parishioners located in the traditionally Catholic community of Yanjing in the eastern TAR. Tsodruk, in Dechen TAP in Yunnan Province, is also home to a Tibetan Catholic congregation. There were a small number of Falun Gong adherents, as well as some unregistered Protestant churches, in the TAR.

The number of monks and nuns in the TAR continued to fluctuate significantly due in part to the "patriotic education" campaigns, which sometimes resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of monks and nuns who were found to be "politically unqualified" or who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama. In 1996 official TAR government statistics estimated that there were 46,000 monks and nuns and 1,700 religious sites in the TAR, but this figure has likely varied over time due to government policy, politically motivated detentions, monastic secularization, and commercialization due to tourism. Furthermore, the government figure of 46,000 monks and nuns represented only the TAR, where the number of monks and nuns is strictly controlled. There are reportedly large numbers of unregistered monks both inside and outside the TAR, a factor that makes it difficult to produce reliable estimates. According to statistics collected by the China Center for Tibetan Studies, a government research institution, there are 1,535 monasteries in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Informed observers estimate that 60,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns live in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The PRC Constitution and laws provide for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe, although the Constitution only protects religious activities defined as "normal." The Constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign domination." The Government sought to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered religious groups and places of worship, as well as to control the growth and scope of the activity of registered and unregistered religious groups. The Government remained wary of Tibetan Buddhism and its links to the Dalai Lama in particular, and tightly controlled religious practices and places of worship in Tibetan areas. Although authorities permitted many traditional religious practices and some public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppressed any activities that they viewed as vehicles for separatism, political dissent, or Tibetan independence. This included religious activities that officials perceived as supporting the Dalai Lama. During the reporting period, the Government intensified its rhetoric against the Dalai Lama. Shortly after the events of March 14, Secretary of the CCP TAR Committee, Zhang Qingli, told regional officials that "the Dalai [Lama] is a wolf in Buddhist monk's robes, an evil spirit with a human face and the heart of a beast," according to the domestic press. The Government also harshly repressed religious activity perceived as venerating the Dalai Lama, whom the authorities see as continuing a tradition of both political and religious leadership.

After repeated requests from the international community, officials from the Chinese Communist Party United Front Work Department and envoys of the Dalai Lama met informally in Shenzhen on May 4, 2008, to discuss the March 2008 events. Prior rounds of formal talks between envoys of the Dalai Lama and government officials occurred in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and late June 2007.

The Government expanded and publicized its "patriotic education" campaigns in monasteries and nunneries after 1995. As part of these campaigns, monks and nuns are required to affirm that Tibet is an inalienable part of the PRC, denounce the Dalai Lama, and recognize the government-appointed Panchen Lama. The primary responsibility for conducting monastic political education remained with monastery leaders. While the form, content, and frequency of patriotic training at monasteries varied widely, the conduct of such training remained a requirement and was a routine part of monastic management. Several media sources reported that frustration among Tibetan Buddhists with these campaigns was a source of unrest in Tibetan areas both inside and outside of the TAR.

During the reporting period, new rules and regulations came into force that increased government control over religious practices, relics, and traditions. On September 1, 2007, the Management Measures on Reincarnation (MMR) issued by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) went into effect, codifying government assertion of control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders and reincarnate lamas. The regulations stipulate that local governments at the city-level and above have the power to deny permission for a Tibetan Buddhist lama to be reincarnated. Reincarnations must be approved by at least provincial-level governments, while the State Council reserves the right to deny the reincarnation of living Buddhas of "especially great influence." The regulations state that no foreign organization or individual can interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within the PRC and not abroad.

A December 27, 2007 article by the official Xinhua News Agency stated, "The rule is bound to have significant impact on standardizing governance on living Buddha reincarnation, protecting people's religious freedom, maintaining the normal order of Tibetan Buddhism, and the building of a harmonious society." Some criticized the rules as unwarranted government interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism and an attempt to minimize the influence of the Dalai Lama over the process of selecting and recognizing reincarnate lamas, including the crucial issue of the selection of his successor.

On January 1, 2007, the TAR Implementation of the PRC Religious Affairs Regulations (the Implementing Regulations) also issued by SARA came into force, superseding the TAR's 1991 regulations. The Implementing Regulations asserted state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The Implementing Regulations codified the practice of controlling the movement of nuns and monks by requiring permission from county-level

religious affairs officials for travel to another prefecture or county-level city within the TAR. In Tibetan Buddhism, visitation to different monasteries and religious sites for specialized training by experts in their particular theological tradition is a key component of religious education. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reported that monks and nuns who go to India claim that their main reasons for choosing to leave Tibet are to continue their studies, which they believe they are unable to do inside Tibet, and to obtain a blessing from the Dalai Lama.

The Implementing Regulations also increased the Government's control over the building and management of religious structures and over large-scale religious gatherings. Official permission is required for all monastic construction and "reconstructing, extending, or repairing religious venues." Likewise, monasteries must request permission to hold large or important religious events. During the reporting period, the TAR government tightened its control over Tibetan Buddhist religious relics. A July 2007 revision to the TAR Cultural Relics Protection Regulations asserted government ownership over cultural and religious relics, as well as religious institutions, which have been classified by officials as cultural sites.

The TAR government has the right under the Implementing Regulations to disapprove any individual's application to take up religious orders. Authorities curtailed the traditional practice of sending young boys to monasteries for religious training by implementing regulations forbidding monasteries from accepting individuals under the age of 18. In practice, many monks studied and worshiped within their monasteries without being "registered" or obtaining an official monastic identification card issued by religious affairs authorities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government officials often associated Buddhist monasteries with pro-independence activism in Tibetan areas. Although the Government did not contribute to the monasteries' operating funds, it oversaw the daily operations of major monasteries through the Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) and local religious affairs bureaus (RABs). Regulations restrict leadership of many DMCs to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specify that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some monasteries, government officials are among the members of the committees.

The Government stated that there were no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's DMC could decide independently how many monks the monastery could support. In practice, the Government imposed strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, particularly in the TAR and Sichuan's Ganzi TAP. For example, Ganzi TAP government order No. 2 of June 28, 2008 reduced the number of monks allowed in a specific monastery as punishment for that monastery's having provided refuge to a monk who had been expelled from another monastery. Since March 2008, monks in Gannan TAP in southern Gansu Province and in Aba TAP in Sichuan Province have reported that as part of new efforts to "reeducate" monks and nuns, they are required to pass a "patriotic" test to stay in the monastery. Some monks reportedly fled their monasteries to avoid these tests, which in some cases required them to trample a photo of the Dalai Lama.

In Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province, as part of "patriotic education" campaigns, hundreds of young monks were reportedly removed from monasteries, as were hundreds of schoolchildren from schools attached to monasteries. Such children were placed in public schools to receive officially mandated compulsory education. On April 8, 2008, authorities closed the Taksang Lhamo Kirti Monastic School in Sichuan Province's Aba TAP and sent 500 novice monks and other Tibetan schoolchildren home. The monastic school, although governed by local authorities for a decade, was not accredited and thus unable to issue degrees that could provide access to higher education.

During the reporting period, local authorities frequently pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their children from monasteries in their hometowns, private schools attached to monasteries, and Tibetan schools in India. In some cases local authorities confiscated identity documents of parents with children in Tibetan schools in India as a means of forcing the parents to make their children return home.

Some experts viewed the MMR, which allows the Government to control the process of selecting Tibetan religious leaders, as an attempt to minimize the Dalai Lama's influence and strengthen government control over the process of selecting reincarnate lamas, including the selection of the next Dalai Lama. Authorities closely supervise the education of lamas approved by the Government. For example, the education of the current Reting Rinpoche, who is 10 years old (born on October 3, 1997), differed significantly from that of his predecessors, and government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of his religious and lay tutors.

The Government severely restricted contacts between reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example, the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, who was recognized by the 17th Karmapa in 1994, remained under government supervision at Nenang Monastery. Foreign delegations have repeatedly been refused permission to visit him.

The quality and availability of high-level religious teachers in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained inadequate. Many

teachers were in exile in India and elsewhere, older teachers were not replaced, and those who remained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach within the TAR. Furthermore, the head leaders of all major schools of Tibetan Buddhism lived abroad. For example, the Karmapa, leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kagyu school and one of the most influential religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, remained in exile after departing the TAR in 1999. According to the Karmapa, he left because of government controls over his movements and the Government's refusal to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his teachers to come to him.

In recent years, DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds generated by the sale of entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study. As a result, some "scholar monks" who formerly had been fully supported had to engage in income-generating activities. Some experts have expressed concern that as a result, fewer monks will be qualified to serve as teachers in the future. While local government officials' attempts to attract tourists to religious sites provided some monasteries with extra income, such activities also deflected time and energy from religious instruction.

Restrictions sometimes were applied even to monks visiting another monastery within the same county for short-term study or teaching. In December 2007 a Tibetan Buddhist monk told the *Ganzi Daily*, the official newspaper of the Ganzi Prefecture Communist Party Committee, that monks in Lithang, Ganzi TAP needed permission to leave their monasteries and enter town. Since the unrest in March 2008, monks in several Tibetan areas reported that they were unable to leave their home monasteries.

Authorities permitted resumption of the Geshe Lharampa examinations, the highest religious examination in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, in July 2004 after a 16-year ban. According to officials, five monks passed the Geshe Lharampa exam in 2007, and four passed in the first half of 2008. In early 2008 monks at the Jokhang Temple, where the test is administered, said that the reinstated exam was of poor quality, that political content unrelated to the test's historical religious content had been added, and that the best candidates were not selected to sit for the exam. Restrictions on religious education made it difficult for monks to receive the level of instruction necessary to take or pass the Geshe Lharampa exam. Monks who wished to sit for the exam traditionally traveled to the TAR to study at such monasteries as Sera and Drepung; however, restrictions on the movement of monks from one monastery to another made it difficult, especially for those residing outside the TAR, to receive advanced religious education. These restrictions, along with regulations on the transfer of religious relics between monasteries, weakened the strong traditional ties between large monasteries in the Lhasa area and affiliates throughout Tibetan areas.

Spiritual leaders reportedly encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries due to lack of funding and denials of government permission to build and operate religious institutions. Officials in some areas contended that these religious venues were a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. In some areas the Government restored monasteries as a means to promote tourism and boost revenue.

After the outbreak of violence on March 14, 2008, security forces blocked access to and exit from important monasteries, including those in the Lhasa area. A heavy police presence in the monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented "unauthorized" visits, including those by foreign journalists.

The Government increased security measures during sensitive anniversaries and festival days in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. In March 2008 authorities in Lhasa heightened security in major monasteries in order to control possible gatherings to mark the 49th anniversary of the 1959 unsuccessful Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule.

The Government forbade religious or celebratory activities in Lhasa and closed several monasteries during the period when the Dalai Lama was awarded the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal on October 17, 2007. The prohibition against celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 continued during the reporting period. In December 2007 the Government banned participation of officials, workers, and students in the Ganden Ngamcho Festival. CCP members were threatened with demotions and salary cuts if they did not comply with the order. The ban on the Great Prayer Festival, or Monlam Chenmo, which is traditionally closely associated with the Geshe exam process, remained in effect.

Government officials maintained that possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama was not illegal and that most TAR residents chose not to display his picture. In practice, the ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama's picture varied regionally and with the political climate. The Implementing Regulations state that "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Photos and books of the Dalai Lama are deemed to fall into this category. During the reporting period, pictures of the Dalai Lama were not openly displayed in major monasteries and could not be purchased openly in the TAR. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors to several monasteries saw pictures of the Dalai Lama displayed in inconspicuous areas.

The Government continued to ban pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the man widely recognized as the Panchen Lama. According to numerous reports, authorities in many Tibetan areas confiscated or defaced photographs of the Dalai Lama

found in monasteries and private residences following the March 2008 unrest. Furthermore, authorities appeared to view possession of such photos or material as evidence of separatist sentiment when detaining individuals on political charges. Merchants who ignored the restrictions and sold Dalai Lama-related images and audiovisual material reported that authorities frequently imposed fines on them.

Authorities prohibited the registration of names for children that included one or more of the names of the Dalai Lama or certain names included on a list of blessed names approved by the Dalai Lama. As a result, many Tibetans have a name they use in daily life and a different, government-approved name for interactions with government officials.

Many Tibetans, particularly those from rural areas, continued to report difficulties obtaining passports. The application process was not transparent, and reported obstacles ranged from bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption to denials based on the applicant's political activities or religious beliefs. Passports previously issued were sometimes confiscated by authorities, especially in the wake of the March 2008 unrest.

Difficulty obtaining both a passport and an entry visa for India continued to limit the ability of Tibetans to travel to India for religious purposes. Nevertheless, thousands of Tibetans, including monks and nuns, visited India via third countries. The number of Tibetans who returned after temporary stays in India is unknown. The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 2,156 Tibetans arrived at the Tibet Reception Center in Nepal in 2007, compared to 2,405 in 2006.

There were continuing reports that the Government detained Tibetans seeking to go to India through Nepal. Such detentions reportedly lasted as long as several months and sometimes took place without the filing of formal charges. Returning exiles reported that authorities pressured them not to discuss subjects that the Government considered politically sensitive, such as the Dalai Lama.

Following the unrest that began in March 2008, passport and border controls were reinforced, making legal foreign travel more difficult and illegal border crossings nearly impossible.

In 2007 approximately 615 Tibetan religious figures held positions in local People's Congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Some religious figures accepted political positions in order to protect their monasteries, and some openly practiced Buddhism. The Government continued to insist, however, that CCP members and senior employees adhere to the CCP's code of atheism, and routine political training for cadres continued to denigrate religious beliefs and promote atheism. TAR officials confirmed that some RAB officers were CCP members and some lower-level RAB officials practiced Buddhism.

On January 1, 2007, new temporary regulations governing foreign media coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games came into effect, ostensibly permitting foreign journalists to conduct interviews and investigations outside of Beijing and Shanghai without official permission. However, these new regulations did not apply to the TAR, and foreign journalists were still required to secure official permission to enter the region. Following the March 14, 2008 protests, however, foreign media have been completely barred from most Tibetan areas, with the exception of a small number of closely monitored government-organized trips.

Travel restrictions for foreign visitors to and within the TAR increased during the period covered by this report, and the Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites in the TAR. In accordance with a 1989 regulation, foreign visitors were required to obtain an official confirmation letter issued by the Government before entering the TAR. After March 2008 the TAR and most Tibetan areas were completely closed to foreign visitors. Many foreigners were turned away at police roadblocks or denied long-distance bus tickets as they tried to enter Tibetan areas outside of the TAR that were officially open.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government strictly controlled access to and information about Tibetan areas, particularly the TAR, making it difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. The Government tightened restrictions on access after the protests in March 2008. The Government's respect for religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas of China deteriorated further following the violent unrest of March 2008.

On March 10, 2008, monks and nuns in Lhasa and Tibetan areas of Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai provinces held peaceful demonstrations to mark the 49th anniversary of the unsuccessful Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule and protested against government policies, including restrictions on religious freedom. After security forces reportedly arrested protestors in Lhasa, monks from the Drepung, Sera, and Ganden monasteries, as well as nuns from the Chutsang nunnery, protested the arrests. After permitting the protests for almost 2 days, police began using tear gas to disperse the monks and then surrounded major monasteries in Lhasa. According to reports, on March 14 when the People's Armed Police (PAP) confronted a group of monks from Ramoche Monastery protesting near the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibetan onlookers

began pulling up paving stones and throwing them at the police. The police retreated, and Tibetan crowds began attacking Han and Hui civilians and their businesses. According to media reports, the police forcibly regained control of Lhasa by the evening of March 15. The Government then closed monasteries and nunneries in Lhasa, imposed a curfew, and prohibited foreign media from entering the TAR.

In the days and weeks following the violence in Lhasa, protests – nearly all of them peaceful – spread across Tibetan areas, including in Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu provinces. The Government responded with increased police and military presence in these areas. By March 27 more than 42 county-level locations, as well as Chengdu, Sichuan Province; Lanzhou, Gansu Province; and Beijing, reported protest activity. According to researchers at Columbia University, there were approximately 125 documented protest incidents between mid-March and early June 2008. Many protests that began peacefully were met by a forceful security response. In a small number of cases, local authorities effectively defused escalating tension through negotiation and dialogue with local religious figures. Daily protests were reportedly continuing in Ganzi TAP at the end of the reporting period.

Because the Government limited access to Tibetan areas, it was difficult to obtain precise arrest and casualty figures. According to government sources, 22 people were killed, and there was damage to schools, hospitals, residences, and stores. The India-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) estimated a total of 79 Tibetans were killed in Lhasa and areas outside the TAR during and following the March protests; reports from the ICT estimated the number of Tibetans killed at more than 200.

On March 15, 2008, the Government reportedly arrested approximately 600 people in Lhasa. According to official sources, more than 1000 Tibetans turned themselves in to security forces at the end of March, following a government-issued request for surrender. Unofficial reports estimated that by the end of March authorities detained at least 1,200 Tibetan protestors in addition to those who voluntarily turned themselves in to authorities. Official sources reported in mid-April that 4,000 individuals had been detained in Lhasa and parts of Gansu Province, with nearly half of those detained being released several weeks later.

The number of monks and nuns at several monasteries reportedly decreased after March 14, 2008. Information about the location of many who were arrested was difficult to confirm. There were reports of ongoing mass detentions of monks and of monasteries being sealed off by police and military personnel as "patriotic education" campaigns intensified. **More than 80 nuns reportedly were detained in Sichuan Province alone since March 2008.**

According to numerous sources, many of those detained after March 10 were subjected to extrajudicial punishments, such as beatings and deprivation of food, water, and sleep for long periods. In some cases detainees reportedly suffered broken bones and other serious injuries at the hands of PAP and Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers. According to sources claiming to be eyewitnesses, the bodies of people killed during the violence or who died during interrogation were disposed of secretly rather than returned to their families.

On April 29, 2008, 30 individuals were sentenced on charges, including arson, looting, attacking state organs, and interfering with the work of public officials in relation to the events of March 14. They received sentences ranging from 3 years to life in prison.

Buddhist figures such as Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the Panchen Lama, and Tenzin Delek Rinpoche remained in detention or prison as did dozens of monks and nuns who resisted patriotic education campaigns. The Dalai Lama, the Karmapa (head of the Karma Kagga school), and leaders of all other schools of Tibetan Buddhism remained in exile. Diplomats and NGOs advocated for international access to Gendun Choekyi Nyima. Nyima turned 19 years old on April 25, 2008. On July 28, 2007, Nyima Tsering, the Vice Chairman of the TAR, told foreign journalists that Gendun Choekyi Nyima was a high school student in the TAR and had "asked not to be disturbed." The Government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu (born on February 13, 1990), the boy it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation.

The Government did not provide any information on Lama Chadrel Rinpoche, who was reportedly still under house arrest near Lhasa for leaking information about the selection of the Panchen Lama. In 2006 U.S. government officials asked for and were denied a meeting in Lhasa with Chadrel Rinpoche, reportedly under house arrest since 2002.

Limited access to information about prisoners and prisons made it difficult to ascertain the number of Tibetan prisoners of conscience or to assess the extent and severity of abuses. According to the Congressional Executive Commission on China's Political Prisoner Database, as of July 2007 there were 294 Tibetan prisoners of conscience, 225 of whom were monks or nuns.

According to a report by the TCHRD, 12 monks at the Dingri Shelkar Choedhe Monastery in Shigatse Prefecture, TAR, were arrested on May 19, 2008 for opposing a political education campaign at the monastery. Police provided no

information about the monks' whereabouts or condition.

On April 8, 2008, police in Ganzi County reportedly fired indiscriminately into a crowd protesting the arrest of two monks for opposing the "patriotic education" campaign at Tongkor Monastery. Thirteen people were reportedly killed: Bhu Bhu Delek, Druklo Tso, Khechok Pawo, Tsering Dhondup the younger, Lhego, Khunchok Sherab, Tseyang Kyi, Lobsang Richen, Sonam Tsultrim, Thubten Sangden, Tsewang Rigzin, Tsering Dhondup the elder, Tenlo , and Kelsang Choedon.

In April 2008 monks at Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province's Aba TAP were reportedly required to step on a photograph of the Dalai Lama as part of their "patriotic education." Monks who refused were reportedly beaten by PAP or PSB personnel.

No information was available on the fate of monks who protested in front of a group of foreign journalists at Lhasa's Jokhang Temple on March 27, 2008. Monks involved in a similar protest in front of foreign journalists at the Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province on April 9, 2008 were reportedly arrested, and there was no information available about their whereabouts at the end of the reporting period.

On August 1, 2007, Rongye Adrak was arrested in Ganzi TAP after calling for the Dalai Lama's return at a public event. On November 20 he was convicted of inciting separatism and sentenced to 8 years in prison. Rongye Adrak's nephew, Adak Lupoe, as well as Kunkhen and Lothok, were subsequently arrested and convicted of leaking intelligence and endangering national security after attempting to provide information concerning Rongye Adrak's arrest to foreign organizations. Another relative of Rongye Adrak, Atruk Kyalgyam, was sentenced to 5 to 9 years in prison.

In May 2007 Khenpo Tzanor, the head of Dungkyab Monastery in Qinghai Province, was forced to step down after refusing to sign a document condemning the Dalai Lama.

Legtsok, a 75-year-old monk of Ngaba Gomang Monastery, killed himself on March 30, 2008, reportedly after being arrested on the way to a prayer service and being beaten severely by security forces.

Two monks in their seventies from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Gyaltsen Tsepa Lobsang and Yangpa Lochoe, whom the Government and DMC had repeatedly harassed after accusing them of ties to the Dalai Lama, reportedly killed themselves in late 2007.

According to a report by Radio Free Asia on August 23, 2006, security officials arrested Khenpo Jinpa, a reincarnate lama and the abbot of Choktsang Taklung Monastery in Ganzi TAP, Sichuan Province, for distributing political leaflets calling for Tibetan independence and a long life for the Dalai Lama. On July 16, 2007, he was sentenced to 3 years in prison.

On August 15, 2006, police in Ganzi TAP detained Lobsang Paldan, a 22-year-old monk from Ganzi Monastery. He was sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment; the charges were unknown. Seven other monks from Ganzi Monastery were also arrested in August 2006 and remained in prison at the end of the reporting period.

The Government destroyed statues of Guru Rinpoche (also known as Guru Padmasambava) in Tarchen Town, Ngari, TAR, near Mt. Kailash and at the Samye Monastery in September 2007 and May 2007, respectively. The Government destroyed the statues in accordance with new restrictions requiring prior government approval for all construction and repairs of monastic property.

Destruction of monastic residences and expulsion of monks and nuns continued at Yachen Monastery in Ganzi TAP, Sichuan Province.

On October 18, 2007, PAP border guards fired on a group of 46 Tibetans attempting to enter Nepal at the Nangpa La Pass. Three were reportedly arrested, and nine were missing; the remainder reached Nepal.

On September 30, 2006, guards at the Nangpa La Pass shot and killed 17-year-old Buddhist nun Kelsang Namtso. From the group of 70 Tibetans, 43 arrived safely in exile; however, at least 25 others, including a number of young children, were taken into custody by the PAP. Film footage of the incident from a Romanian climber clearly showed that the Tibetans were unarmed and were fired on from behind.

Authorities reportedly continued to torture imprisoned monks and nuns, especially those detained after March 10. There were reports of severe beatings that resulted in broken bones and permanent injury. Following her release to the United States in March 2006, Tibetan Buddhist nun Phuntsog Nyidrol reported that she had been tortured by government authorities. She stated that religious prisoners were subjected to torture and were not permitted to meet with other religious prisoners, receive visits from family members, use their religious names in prison, or recite prayers in prison.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Since ethnicity and religion are often inextricably linked, it is difficult to categorize many incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tensions among ethnic groups in Tibetan areas, including the Han, the Hui, Tibetan Muslims, and other Tibetans, escalated during the reporting period.

On March 14, 2008, protests by Tibetans in Lhasa escalated into violence, with attacks perpetrated against Han and Hui people, and vandalism perpetrated against Han- and Hui-owned businesses, property, and residences. After state media programs showed Tibetans engaging in unprovoked attacks on Han and Hui, citizens inside and outside the TAR reacted with anti-Tibetan sentiment. Domestic media coverage of the events in Lhasa on March 14 repeatedly showed rioting Tibetans beating Han and Hui residents and burning government or other buildings but did not show actions by security forces against Tibetan civilians. Official PRC news agencies reported that 19 Han residents of Lhasa, including 1 police officer, were targeted by rioters due to their ethnicity and killed during the riots, and 3 Tibetans were killed in the rioting. Domestic media attributed the violence in Lhasa to a small minority of outside agitators led by the Dalai Lama and intent on achieving independence for Tibet.

Friction between Tibetan Buddhists and the growing Hui Muslim population in Tibetan areas intensified during the reporting period. Tibetans burned part of a mosque in Lhasa during the March 14 riot; in August 2007 Tibetan monks destroyed a mosque under construction in a majority Tibetan area in Gabde County, Qinghai Province.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu made a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas, using focused pressure in cases of abuse. In regular exchanges, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. diplomatic personnel consistently urged both the Government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibetan areas.

Embassy and consulate officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. The U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom called upon the Government to expand religious freedom in the TAR and Tibetan areas outside the TAR and urged the Government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama at the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue in May 2008.

Following the March 14, 2008 violence in Lhasa, the U.S. Secretary of State issued a statement calling on the PRC Government to exercise restraint in dealing with the protests, strongly urging all sides to refrain from violence and urging the Government to address policies that created tensions due to their impact on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods.

On October 16 and 17, 2007, the U.S. President met with the Dalai Lama and presented him with the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor at the U.S. Capitol.

U.S. diplomatic personnel stationed in the country maintained contacts with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners in Tibetan areas and traveled regularly to the TAR and other Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom. The ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to travel freely and talk openly with persons in Tibetan areas was extremely limited. Not all requests to travel to Tibetan areas were granted. After the outbreak of unrest in the TAR and other Tibetan areas in March 2008, U.S. government officials repeatedly requested diplomatic access to affected areas, but the majority of these requests were not granted. Unpublished restrictions on travel by foreigners into the TAR and other Tibetan areas imposed in March resulted in U.S. diplomats and other foreigners being turned back at police roadblocks or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were officially open to foreign visitors.

HONG KONG

The Basic Law, which serves as the Constitution of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Six of the largest religious groups have long collaborated on community affairs and make up a joint conference of religious leaders.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The territory has an area of 422 square miles on more than 200 islands and the mainland, and a population of 6.9 million. Approximately 43 percent of the population practices some form of religion. The two most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, which are often observed together in the same temple. The region is home to approximately 700,000 Buddhists and Taoists, 320,000 Protestant Christians, 243,000 Roman Catholics, 90,000 Muslims, 40,000 Hindus, 8,000 Sikhs, 4,600 Jehovah's Witnesses, and 4,000 practicing Jews. Confucianism is also prevalent in the HKSAR. Although few believers practiced Confucianism as a formal religion, Confucian ideas and social tenets were often blended together with Taoism and Buddhism. The number of Falun Gong practitioners reportedly dropped from approximately 1,000 to 500 since the crackdown on the mainland began in July 1999; however, official estimates for the number of practitioners in the region are lower.

There are approximately 600 Buddhist and Taoist temples, 800 Christian churches and chapels, 5 mosques, 4 synagogues, 1 Hindu temple, and 1 Sikh temple.

There are 1,400 Protestant congregations, representing 50 denominations. The largest Protestant denomination is the Baptist Church, followed by the Lutheran Church. Other major denominations include Seventh-day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance groups, the Church of Christ in China, Methodists, Pentecostals, and the Salvation Army. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) is also present.

The pope is recognized as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics are served by a cardinal and bishop, as well as priests, monks, and nuns, all of whom maintain links to the Vatican. The office of the assistant secretary general of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference is located in the HKSAR. Along with its apostolic work, the Catholic Church engages in a broad range of social service activities: it operates 6 hospitals, 14 clinics, 38 social centers, 18 hostels, 13 homes for the elderly, and 20 rehabilitation centers. In addition, it operates 309 schools and kindergartens, serving more than 250,000 children.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law provides for freedom of religion, and the Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination by the HKSAR Government. Sovereignty over HKSAR was transferred from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997; however, according to the Basic Law the HKSAR enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the principle of "one country, two systems." The Government does not recognize a state religion. An opinion poll conducted in January 2008 by the University of Hong Kong found that the Hong Kong people gave religious freedom a score of 8.86 out of 10, the highest rating since the poll began after the handover in July 1997.

The Home Affairs Bureau functions as a liaison between religious groups and the Government. The Government grants public holidays to mark special religious days on the traditional Chinese and Christian calendars, including Christmas and the birth of Buddha.

There were no religious tests for government service, and a wide range of faiths was represented in the

Government, judiciary, and civil service. In addition, the Election Committee Ordinance stipulates that the 6 largest religious groups in Hong Kong hold 40 seats on the 800-member Election Committee, which is tasked with nominating and voting for the region's chief executive. The groups represented are the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, Hong Kong Christian Council, Hong Kong Taoist Association, the Confucian Academy, and the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. The forty representatives are selected by leaders of their respective religious groups.

Religious groups are specifically exempted from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of nongovernmental organizations; therefore, registration with the Government remains voluntary. Since spiritual exercise groups are not classified as religious groups, these groups, including the Falun Gong, are required to register under the Societies Ordinance. Falun Gong is generally free to practice, organize, conduct nonviolent public demonstrations, and attract public attention through parades and pamphleteering. During the reporting period, Falun Gong regularly conducted public protests against the repression of fellow practitioners. Other spiritual exercise groups, including Xiang Gong and Yan Xin Qigong, were registered and practiced freely.

A large variety of faith-based aid groups, including Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic groups, provide education, healthcare, and social welfare services. The Government sometimes funds the operating costs of schools and hospitals built by religious groups. In 2003 the Government passed the Education (Amendment) Ordinance, affecting 300 Catholic schools that enroll approximately 25 percent of the student population. The ordinance, which requires full compliance by 2010, mandates that all schools receiving government funding must establish an incorporated management committee. Forty percent of the members of the management committee are to be elected by teacher and parent groups; sixty percent are to be appointed by the sponsoring body. The Catholic Church sued to have the ordinance overturned in December 2005, arguing that the ordinance could prevent it from achieving its educational goals and requesting an exemption for Catholic schools from the management committee requirement.

Catholic and Protestant clergy give seminars and teach classes on the mainland, and two-way student exchanges are ongoing.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Under the Basic Law, the PRC Government does not have jurisdiction over religious practices in the HKSAR. The Basic Law calls for ties between the region's religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on "nonsubordination, noninterference, and mutual respect."

On March 13, 2008, the Court of Appeal was to review a case brought by the Catholic diocese to the Court of First Instance in December 2005; however, both the Government and diocese asked that the appeal be deferred to allow for more time to resolve the matter out of court. The Catholic diocese sued to have the Education (Amendment) Ordinance, passed in 2003 and scheduled for full compliance by 2010, overturned. In November 2006 the Court of First Instance found that the ordinance was consistent with the Basic Law; the March court date represented the appeal of this decision.

In April 2008 a lawmaker stated that he had received complaints from Muslim in-patients alleging that food provided by the Hospital Authority at public hospitals had not been religiously "sanctified," and that Muslim in-patients were therefore unable to consume the food. The same lawmaker stated that Sikhs residing in the HKSAR allegedly became the target of police officers' stop-and-search actions because of their religious attire, and their children were allegedly ill-treated at school.

The Government stated that it does not discriminate against any particular religious groups, as the right to freedom of religious belief is protected under the Basic Law and the Bill of Rights. When formulating policies and providing public services, all government bodies are required under Article 32 of the Basic Law and Article 15 of the Bill of Rights to treat the public on an equal basis regardless of their religious belief. As such, the Government invited all stakeholders, including affected organizations or individuals, to provide views on proposed measures to enhance public understanding and improve the quality of those measures.

During the reporting period one religious group claimed that it lacked places for assembly or worship, citing high property costs as the principal obstacle. The Government permitted religious groups to apply to use land set aside for government and community purposes. Religious groups were able to apply for general

commercial land on concessionary terms, although they must still compete in the market for the land itself. The Government stated that religious organizations could apply to develop religious facilities in accordance with local legislation or to use facilities at community halls or commercial buildings so long as such activities did not breach the land lease.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

According to several reports and verbatim statements published by *The Epoch Times* in February 2007, Dr. Wang Lian, a Falun Gong practitioner who was employed as a technical network advisor in the HKSAR office of *The Epoch Times*, was detained and interrogated by Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials on the mainland in September 2006. Dr. Lian claimed that PSB officials directed him to spy on his colleagues and facilitate the disruption of operations, including hacking into the computer networks, at *The Epoch Times'* office. He reportedly turned over some files and documents to the PSB, which he claimed were of limited use, and fled to Australia to seek asylum in February 2007. As of the end of the reporting period, no update on Dr. Lian was available.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Prominent social leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Consulate general officers have made clear U.S. Government interest in the full protection and maintenance of freedom of religion. Consulate general officers at all levels, including the consul general, met regularly with religious leaders and community representatives.

MACAU

The Basic Law, which serves as the Constitution of the Macau Special Administrative Region (Macau SAR), provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The region has a total area of 11 square miles and, according to official statistics in 2006, a population of 530,000. Buddhism, which is practiced by nearly 80 percent of the population, is the largest religion. Approximately 4 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and more than 1 percent is Protestant. Smaller religious groups include Baha'is, estimated at 2,500 persons; Muslims, estimated at 400 persons; and Falun Gong practitioners, estimated at 200 persons.

There are approximately 50 Buddhist and Taoist temples, 60 Christian churches (of which 18 are Catholic), and 1 mosque.

Approximately 50 percent of primary and secondary students were enrolled in schools operated or funded by religious organizations. These schools may, under law, provide religious education, but the Government did not maintain statistics on this subject.

Many Protestant denominations are represented, including Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Evangelical denominations and independent local churches also exist in the region. The Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) enrolled students in virtual seminary programs.

As of December 2006 an estimated 70 Protestant churches with 6,000 members conducted services in Chinese; attendance was reported to be approximately 4,000 worshippers every Sunday. An estimated 300 Protestants attended services conducted in foreign languages.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Article 34 of the Basic Law states that "Macau residents shall have freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public." Furthermore, Article 128 stipulates that "the Government, consistent with the principle of religious freedom, shall not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations or in the efforts of religious organizations and their believers to maintain and develop relations with their counterparts outside Macau or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the laws of the SAR."

The Freedom of Religion and Worship Law stipulates that "Freedom of religion and worship are recognized and protected."

The Religious Freedom Ordinance, which remained in effect after the 1999 handover of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China (PRC), provides for freedom of religion, privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. The Government generally respected these rights in practice.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance allows religious organizations to register directly with the Identification Bureau, the bureau that is required under the law to receive and process registrations; applicants need only supply their name, identification card number, contact information, organization name, and copy of the group's charter to register with officials. Religious entities can apply to media organizations and companies to use mass media (television, radio, etc.) to preach, and such applications are generally approved.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance stipulates that religious groups may develop and maintain relations with religious groups abroad. The Catholic Church, which is in communion with the Vatican, recognizes the pope as the head of the Church. In 2003 the Holy See appointed the current coadjutor bishop for the diocese. Beginning in September 2007, the Macau Inter-University Institute (IIUM), which is affiliated with the Catholic University in Portugal, offered a Christian studies course that included Catholic seminary students from the mainland. According to IIUM's website, the Chief Executive of Macau SAR, Edmund Ho, specifically requested that the school implement a program of study to prepare candidates for the Catholic ministry in the region.

Many religious groups, including Catholic, Protestant, and Baha'i groups, provide extensive social welfare services to the community. The Government subsidizes the establishment of Catholic schools, child care centers, clinics, homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centers, and vocational training centers.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report. Under the Basic Law, the PRC Government does not govern religious practices in the region.

The Falun Gong is not registered with the Identification Bureau. While the Bureau has not issued instructions regarding the Falun Gong, senior officials have stated that Falun Gong practitioners may continue their legal activities despite their lack of registration.

According to Falun Gong practitioners, they were able to practice their daily exercises in public parks, although police observed them once or twice a month and checked personal identification. Falun Gong representatives, however, have claimed that they were denied entry into the region, especially during sensitive political periods, and filed complaints with the police about being denied the right to display photographs of religious activity or abuses against fellow practitioners. The matter had not been resolved by the end of the reporting period.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the region.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Relations among the various religious communities were good, and citizens generally were tolerant of the religious views and practices of others. Public ceremonies and dedications often included prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Officers from the U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong met regularly with leaders of all religious groups and spiritual organizations in the region.

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